

Message Text

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ACTION ABF-01

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 A-01 EUR-12 MMO-01 /031 W
-----001918 071628Z /43

R 071548Z SEP 78
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8619
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY OSLO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

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STADIS//////////

ALSO FOR USEC

TO BEN READ FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: AGAO
SUBJECT: EXPANDED ROLE OF GAO AND GAO VISITS TO
SELECTED POSTS

REFS: (A) STATE 207030 (B) BRUSSELS 16017

1. HERewith EMBASSY BRUSSELS' RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS POSED
REGARDING RECENT GAO ACTIVITY IN BELGIUM KEYED TO THE
SEQUENCE SET FORTH IN PARA 3, REF A.

2. FREQUENCY OF GAO VISITS. THERE WERE SIX GAO VISITS
TO BRUSSELS IN THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 1977, AND NINE
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IN THE YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 1978. MANY OF THESE VISITS
PRODUCED FOLLOW-UP LETTERS AND TELEPHONE CALLS TO THE
INDIVIDUALS AND INSTITUTIONS CONTACTED, STRETCHING OVER
WEEKS OR MONTHS. FOR EXAMPLE, GAO IS CURRENTLY DIS-
CUSSING WITH THE EUROPEAN CONSORTIUM PARTNERS ITS
FORTHCOMING REPORT ON AN F-16 PROGRAM INVESTIGATION
CONDUCTED LAST SPRING.

3. DURATION OF VISITS. GAO VISITS HAVE RANGED FROM A MINIMUM OF 2-3 DAYS TO ONE INQUIRY WHICH LASTED FIVE WEEKS. THE MEDIAN STAY HAS BEEN LESS THAN ONE WORK WEEK. THE EMBASSY JUDGES THAT THE DURATION OF GAO VISITS IS REASONABLE GIVEN ITS APPROACH TO INVESTIGATIONS, WHICH DOES NOT EMPHASIZE PRELIMINARY RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION IN ADVANCE OF VISITS.

4. TRENDS IN NUMBER AND DURATION OF VISITS. THE TREND HAS BEEN UPWARD WITH THE SCOPE OF GAO INTERESTS STEADILY BROADENING. FOR EXAMPLE, ONE GAO VISIT HAS OCCURRED SINCE JUNE 30 AND TWO WERE PROJECTED FOR SEPTEMBER UNTIL AN EMBASSY OBJECTION CAUSED ONE TO BE SCRUBBED. GAO HORIZONS HAVE ALSO BEEN WIDENING WITH RESPECT TO DURATION; THE SEPTEMBER VISITS WERE ANNOUNCED AS "UP TO TEN DAYS."

5. OPTIMUM SIZE AND COMPOSITION OF GAO TEAMS. A JUDGMENT IS DIFFICULT SINCE THE EMBASSY IS NOT PRIVY TO THE OVERALL ORGANIZATION AND STAFFING OF A GAO INVESTIGATION. THE EMBASSY HAS HAD NO DIFFICULTY WITH THE SIZE OR COMPOSITION OF GAO VISITING TEAMS, ALTHOUGH NOT ALL PERSONNEL HAVE APPEARED TO BE EXPERT IN THE SUBJECTS THEY WERE EXAMINING.

6. MEANS FOR IMPROVING EFFICIENCY OF GAO VISITS. WE BELIEVE THAT GAO COULD WELL DRAW UPON AVAILABLE RESOURCES LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO ASSEMBLE MUCH OF ITS DATA BEFORE EMBARKING ON FIELD VISITS. PRELIMINARY STUDY COULD INCLUDE CULLING DATA AVAILABLE IN WASHINGTON AND SUBMISSION OF A QUESTIONNAIRE TO POSTS. THIS APPLIES IN PARTICULAR TO INQUIRIES INTO THE ACTIVITIES OF FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS AND FOREIGN ENTERPRISES. IN SUCH CASES GAO SHOULD SEEK CONTACTS WITH FOREIGN ENTITIES ONLY WHEN THE EMBASSY IS UNABLE TO PROVIDE DESIRED DATA AND ONLY WITH EMBASSY ACQUIESCENCE. IN CONCEIVING ITS PROJECTS, GAO SHOULD REALISTICALLY ASSESS HOW MUCH THE MARKET WILL BEAR IN TERMS OF DEMANDS UPON THE TIME, RESOURCES AND GOODWILL OF FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS AND INSTITUTIONS, WHICH ARE NOT BEHOLDEN TO THE U.S. CONGRESS.

7. DEMANDS ON POSTS' RESOURCES. GAO TEAMS DO NOT NORMALLY DRAW SIGNIFICANTLY UPON POST RESOURCES BEYOND STANDARD FACILITATIVE ASSISTANCE. IN GENERAL GAO REQUESTS FOR MAKING OF APPOINTMENTS, LOCAL TRANSPORTATION, OFFICE SPACE OR SECRETARIAL ASSISTANCE ARE NOT ONEROUS. WE HAVE NO RECORD OF DOS OVERTIME BEING INCURRED ON GAO'S ACCOUNT. DEMANDS UPON THE TIME AND ATTENTION OF SUBSTANTIVE EMBASSY PERSONNEL IN ORDER TO KEEP ABREAST OF AND CONTROL

GAO IN-COUNTRY ACTIVITIES HAS RISEN SHARPLY AS GAO
HORIZONS WIDEN.

8. REACTION OF HOST COUNTRY TO GAO VISITS. THE BELGIAN
GOVERNMENT REACTION TO GAO VISITS HAS VARIED WITH THEIR
NATURE. BELGIAN AUTHORITIES ARE UNCONCERNED BY GAO
INVESTIGATIONS INTO IN-HOUSE USG ACTIVITIES, SUCH AS
THE 1977 FBO STUDY HERE. THEY ARE ACCUSTOMED TO GAO
INQUIRIES INTO AREAS OF OVERLAPPING US-BELGIAN INTEREST,
SUCH AS THE MAY, 1978, INVESTIGATION OF THE EFFECTS OF THE

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-15 A-01 EUR-12 MMO-01 /031 W
-----001958 071628Z /43

R 071548Z SEP 78
FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
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ALSO FOR USEC

TO BEN READ FROM AMBASSADOR

1921 ANTI-DUMPING ACT UPON FOREIGN AS WELL AS U.S.
BUSINESS INTERESTS. THEY UNDERSTAND THAT THE FIVE-NATION
JOINT F-16 PRODUCTION PROGRAM IS OF HIGH INTEREST TO THE
CONGRESS, BUT THEY REACTED SHARPLY IN 1977 WHEN A GAO
REPORT ON THE PROGRAM, RELEASED WITHOUT AGREEMENT OR
COORDINATION WITH THE EUROPEAN PARTICIPANTS, CREATED
DOMESTIC POLITICAL PROBLEMS HERE. GAO IS TAKING PAINS
TO DO BETTER WITH ITS UPCOMING REPORT ON THE F-16 PROGRAM,
BUT BELGIANS WILL CONTINUE TO REGARD GAO'S SEEMINGLY
INEXHAUSTIBLE INTEREST IN THE F-16 PROGRAM -- FOUR

SEPARATE INVESTIGATIONS IN TWO YEARS -- AS AT BEST A
NECESSARY EVIL. WE NOTE AN INCREASINGLY DEFENSIVE MOOD
IN BELGIAN GOVERNMENT QUARTERS AS GAO INVESTIGATIONS
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PROBE IN THE DIRECTION OF SENSITIVE RELATIONS BETWEEN
BELGIAN GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY AND BELGIAN POLICIES
AND TECHNIQUES TO ASSIST ITS INDUSTRY. THE SUSPICION
HAS ARISEN THAT GAO IS BEING USED BY AMERICAN INDUSTRIES--
EVEN INDIVIDUAL COMPANIES -- TO NOSE INTO TRADE
SECRETS AND PROVIDE AMMUNITION FOR U.S. PROTECTIONIST
INITIATIVES IN THE CONGRESS. WE HAVE JUST HAD THE
FIRST SPECIFIC PROTEST FROM THE BELGIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY
RE GAO ACTIVITY. (REF B)

9. CONDUCT OF GAO PERSONNEL. IN GENERAL GAO PEOPLE HAVE
BEEN PERSONALLY TACTFUL AND DISCREET IN THEIR QUEST FOR
INFORMATION. BELGIAN OFFICIALS HAVE SHOWN IMPATIENCE
AT TIMES WITH A LACK OF EXPERTISE IN SOME, NECESSITAT-
ING IN THE FORMER'S VIEW TIME-WASTING EXPOSITION AND
HIGH RISK OF GAO MISAPPREHENSIONS.

10. COMMENT: GAO'S ASSERTED PURVIEW ABROAD HAS EXPANDED
SHARPLY IN RECENT YEARS. ITS SENSITIVITY TO THE
IMPACT OF ITS ACTIVITIES UPON THE CONDUCT OF RELATIONS
BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THIS HOST COUNTRY HAS NOT, IN OUR
VIEW, KEPT PACE. SOME KNOWLEDGEABLE BELGIANS LOOK
UPON THE RISING PRESENCE AND INDEPENDENCE OF GAO ABROAD
AS A MANIFESTATION OF THE MUCH-BRUITED POWER STRUGGLE
BETWEEN CONGRESS AND THE EXECUTIVE. QUITE APART FROM THE
PRACTICAL ADVANTAGES OF GAO SEEKING PRIOR COORDINATION
WITH AND ASSISTANCE FROM THE DEPARTMENT AND THE MISSION
IN QUESTION, WE BELIEVE THIS MISTAKEN PECEPTION WOULD
BE AVOIDED IF THE EMBASSY WERE CLEARLY SEEN TO BE THE
U.S. AGENCY COORDINATING AND ULTIMATELY CONTROLLING GAO
INVESTIGATIONS WHICH REACH OUTSIDE THE USG FAMILY
ABROAD. CHAMBERS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 07 sep 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978BRUSSE17017
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780364-0927
Format: TEL
From: BRUSSELS
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780990/aaaacwsa.tel
Line Count: 210
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a7bdde55-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ABF
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Reference: 78 STATE 207030, 78 BRUSSELS 16017
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1511559
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: EXPANDED ROLE OF GAO AND GAO VISITS TO SELECTED POSTS
TAGS: AGAO
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a7bdde55-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014